

A

1509/1172

SERMON

PREACHED at the

FUNERAL

of the Rt. Honorable

JOHN Earl of ROCHESTER,

Who died at *Woostock-Parck*, July 26. 1680, and
was buried at *Spilsbury* in *Oxford-shire*, Aug. 9.

St. LUKE 15. 7.

*I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven
over one Sinner that repenteth, more than over
ninety and nine just persons that need no re-
pentance.*

By *Robert Parsons* M. A. Chaplain to the Right
Honorable ANNE Countess Dowager of
ROCHESTER.

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ars*, near the *Water-side*. For the Benefit of the
Poor. 1707.

To the Right Honourable *Anne*, and *Elizabeth Dowager*
Countesses of Rochester.

Right Honorable,

Your Ladships, or any else, cannot think meaner of this Performance than I my self do ; for besides the great hurry and disorder that I was in upon the loss of such a Patron as my Lord, I am sufficiently conscious how unfit I am to appear in public, especially upon such a nice and great Subject. Has his Lordships particular Commands brought me to the Pulpit, so Your only have brought me to the Press. And therefore I hope, whatever usage the following Discourse may meet with abroad; I shall always find a shelter in your Ladships Favours : and the rather, because you can, both of you, largely attest the truth of most of the remarkable Occurrences that I have taken notice of during his Lordships Penitential sickness. I shall add nothing more, but wish You may never forget the goodness of Almighty God, who (through this whole melancholy Scene) has signalized his good Providences to You both: and that You may ever live under the special protection thereof, is the constant prayer of

Atterbury Aug.

30. 1680.

Your HONORS, Most Faithful and

most Obedient humble Servant,

ROBERT PARSONS.

St. LUKE 15. 7.

I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one Sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, that need no repentance.

IF ever there were a subject that might deserve and exhaust all the treasures of Religious Eloquence in the description of so great a Man, and so great a Sinner as now lies before us; together with the wonders of the Divine goodness, in making him as great a Penitent ; I think the present occasion affords one as remarkable as any place or age can produce.

Indeed so great and full a matter it is, that 'tis too big to come out of my mouth, and perhaps not all of it fit or needful so to do. The greatness of his Parts are well enough known, and of his Sins too well in the world ; and neither my Capacity, nor Experience, nor my Profession will allow me to be so

proper



proper a judge, either of the one or the other. Only as God has been pleased to make me a long while a sad Spectator, and a secret Mourner for his Sins; so has he at last graciously heard the prayers of his nearest Relations, and true Friends, for his Conversion and Repentance: and 'tis the good tidings of that specially, what God has done for his Soul, that I am now to publish and tell abroad to the world, not only by the obligations of mine Office, in which I had the honour to be a weak Minister to it, but by his own express and dying Commands.

Now altho, to describe this worthily, would require a Wit equal to that with which he lived, and a Devotion too, equal to that with which he died, and to match either will be a very hard task; yet besides that I am not sufficient for these things, (for who is?) and that my thoughts have been rather privately busied to secure a real repentance to himself, whilst living, than to publish it abroad to others in artificial dress after he is dead; I say, besides all this, I think I shall have less need to call in the aids of secular Eloquence. The proper habit of repentance is not fine Linnen, or any delicate Array, such as are used in the Court, or Kings Houses, but Sack-cloth and ashes: And the way which God Almighty takes to convey it, not by the words of Mans wisdom, but by the plainness of his written Word, assisted by the inward power and demonstration of the Spirit: and the effects it works, and by which it discovers itself, are not any raptures of wit and fancy, but the most humble prostrations both of soul and spirit, and the captivating all humane imaginations to the obedience of a despised Religion, and a crucified Saviour.

And 'tis in this array I intend to bring out this Penitent to you; an array which I am sure he more valued, and desired to appear in, both to God and the World, than in all the triumphs of Wit and Gallantry, And therefore (waving all these Rhetorical flourishes, as beneath the Solemnity of the occasion, and the majesty of that great and weighty Truth I am now to deliver) I shall content my self with the office of a plain Historian, to relate faithfully and impartially what I saw and heard; specially during his Penitential sorrows; which if all that hear this day had been spectators of, there would then have been no need of a Sermon to convince men, but every man would have been as much a Preacher to himself of this Truth, as I am, except these sorrows: And yet even these Sorrows should be turn'd into Joys too, if we would only do what we pray for,

that the will of God may be done in earth, as it is in heaven : for so our Blessed Lord assure us ; I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, &c. From which I shall consider,

1. The Sinner particularly that is before us.
2. The Repentance of this Sinner, together with the means, the time, and all probable sincerity of it.
3. The joy that is in Heaven, and should be on Earth, for the Repentance of this Sinner.
4. The comparative greatness and preeminence of this joy on the account of his Example, that is, and should be for the Repentance of this Sinner, more than for the constant and uniform virtuoussness of any good liver ; which will naturally lead me to my.

Fifth and last particular, to a special address or application to all that hear me ; that they would all joyn in this joy, in praise and thanksgivings to God for the conversion of this Sinner ; and if there be any that have been like him in their sins, that they would also speedily imitate him in their repentance.

And 1. let us consider the Person before us, as he certainly was, a great Sinner. But because man was upright before he was a sinner, And to measure the greatness of his fall, it will be necessary to take a view of that height from which he fell ; give me leave to go back a little to look into the rock from which he was hewn, the Quality, Family, Education, and Personal Accomplishments of this Great man. In doing of which I think no man will charge me with any design of customary flattery, or formality ; since I intend only thereby to shew the greatness and unhappiness of his folly ; in the perverting so many excellent abilities and advantages for virtue and piety in the service of sin, and so becoming a more universal, insinuating, and prevailing example of it.

As for his Family, on both sides, from which he was descended, they were some of the most famous in their generations. His Grandfather was that excellent and truly great man, Charles Lord Wilmot, Viscount Athlone in Ireland. Henry his Father who inherited the same Title and Greatness, was by his late Majesty King CHARLES the I. created Baron of Alderbury in Oxfordshire, and by his present Majesty Earl of Rochester. He was a man of signal Loyalty and Integrity indeed ; and of such Courage and Conduct in Military affairs as became a great General. But my endeavours of this kind are superseded, tho I had time

time, by my want of abilities to declare it worthily, as well as by the notoriety of these severals; and that person must be very ignorant of the late Transactions in the three Kingdoms, and the misfortunes of our present King, who understands not the service and value of that eminent Subject. His Mother (of whom I might speak great and worthy things, were it not that I avoid the imputation of flattery) was the Relict of Sir *Francis Henry Lee* of *Ditchly* in the County of *Oxford* Baronet, Grand-mother to the present Right Honourable Earl of *Litchfield*, and the Daughter of that Generous and Honourable Gentleman Sir *John St. Johns* of *Lyddiard* in the County of *Wils* Baronet, whose Family was so remarkable for loyalty, that several of his Sons willingly offer'd themselves in the Day of Battel, and died for it; and whilst the memory of the *English* or *Irish* Rebellion lasts, that Family cannot want a due veneration in the minds of any person, that loves either God or the King,

As for his Education, it was in *Wadham* College in *Oxford*, under the care of that wise and excellent Governour Dr. *Blancard*, the late Right Reverend Bishop of *Worcester*; there it was that he laid a good foundation of learning and study, though he afterwards built upon that foundation hay and stubble. There he first suck'd from the breasts of his Mother the University those perfections of Wit, and Eloquence, and Poetry, which afterwards by his own corrupt stomach, or some ill juices after, were turn'd into poison to himself and others: which certainly can be no more a blemish to those Illustrious Seminaries of Piety and good Learning, than a disobedient Child is to a wise and virtuous Father, or the fall of Man to the excellency of Paradise. His Quality I shall take no notice of, there being so much of what was excellent and extraordinary in this great Person, that I have no room for any thing that is common to him with others.

As for his Wit, he had so rare and fruitful in its Invention, and with so choice and delicate in its Judgment, that there is nothing wanting in his Composures to give a full answer to that question, what and where Wit is? except the purity and choice of subject. For had such excellent seeds but fallen upon good ground, and instead of pitching upon a Beast or a Lust, been led up on high, to celebrate the mysteries of the Divine Love, Psalms, and Hymns, and Spirituals songs; I perswade myself we might by this time have receiv'd from his Pen as excellent and Idea of Divine Poetry, under the Gospel, useful to

the teaching of Virtue; especially in this generation, as his profane Verses have been to destroy it. And I am confident, had God spared him a longer life, this would have been the whole business of it, as I know it was the vow and purpose of his Sickness.

His natural talent was excellent, but he had hugely improved it by Learning and Industry, being thoroughly acquainted with all Classick Authors, both Greek and Latin; a thing very rare, if not peculiar to him, amongst those of his quality. Which yet he used not, as other Poets have done, to translate or steal from them, but rather to better, and improve them by his own natural fancy. And whoever reads his Composes, will find all things in them so peculiarly Great, New, and Excellent, that he will easily pronounce, That tho he has lent to many others, yet he has borrowed of none; and that he has been as far from a sordid imitation of those before him, as he will be from being reach'd by those that follow him.

His other personal accomplishments in all the perfections of a Gentleman for the Court or the Country, wherof he was known by all men to be a very great Master, is no part of my business to describe or understand: and whatever they were in themselves, I am sure they were but miserable Comforters to him, since they only minister'd to his sins, and made his example the more fatal and dangerous; for so we may own, (nay I am obliged by him not to hide, but to shew the rocks, which others may avoid) that he was once one of the *greatest of Sinners*.

And truly none but one so great in parts could be so; as the chiefest of the Angels for knowledge and power became most dangerous. His Sins were like his Parts, (for from them corrupted they sprang,) all of them high and extraordinary. He seem'd to affect something singular and paradoxical in his Impieties, as well as in his Writings, above the reach and thought of other men; taking as much pains to draw others in, and to pervert the right ways of virtue, as the Apostles and Primitive Saints, *to save their own Souls, and them that heard them*. For this was the heighning and amazing circumstance of his sins, that he was so diligent and industrious to recommend and propagate them; not like those of old that *hated the light*, but those the Prophet mentions, *Isaiah 3. 9. who declare their sin as Sodom and hide it not, that take it upon their shoulders, and bind it to them as a Crown; framing Arguments for Sin, making Prophyets to it, and writing Panegyricks upon Vice; singing Praise*

to the great enemy of God; and casting down Coronets and Crowns before his Throne.

Nay so confirm'd was he in Sin, that he lived, and oftentimes almost died, a Martyr for it. God was pleas'd sometimes to punish him with the effects of his folly, yet till now (he confessed) *they had no power to melt him into true repentance* ; or if at any time he had some lucid intervals from his folly and madness, yet (alas) how short and transitory were they ? all that goodness was but as a morning cloud, and as the early dew which vanishes away ; he still return'd to the same excess of riot, and that with so much the more greediness, the longer he had fasted from it.

And yet even this desperate Sinner, that one would think had made a covenant with Death, and was at an agreement with Hell, and just upon the brink of them both ; God, to magnifie the riches of his grace and mercy, was pleas'd to snatch as a brand out of the fire. As St. Paul, to before a blasphemers, a persecutor, and injurious, yet obtain'd mercy, that in him Christ Jesus might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them that should hereafter believe on him to everlasting life. 1 Tim. 1. 13. 16. so God struck him to the ground as it were by a light from heaven, and a voice of thunder round about him. Insomuch that now the scales fall from his eyes, as they did from St. Paul's ; his stony heart was open'd, and streams of tears gush'd out, the bitter but wholesome tears of true Repentance.

And that this may appears to be so, I think it necessary to account for these three things.

1. For the means of it : that it was not barely the effect of Sickness, or the fear of Death ; but the hand of God also working in them and by them manifestly.

2. For the time of it : that though it was a Death-bed Repentance, and therefore full of danger, and the utmost hazard ; yet was is not impossible to be true, nor absolutely desperate.

3. For the sincerity of it : that what was thus possible to be good and true, probably was so ; which though none but God that sees the heart, can tell certainly, yet man even also may and ought to believe it ; not only in the judgment of Charity, but of moral Justice, from all evident signs of it, which were possible to be given by one in his condition.

And first for the Means or method of it. That which prepared the way for it was a sharp and painful Sickness, with which God was pleas'd to visit him ; the way which the Almighty often takes to reduce the wandring Sinner to the know-

knowledge of God and of himself : *I will be unto Ephraim as a Lion, and as a yong Lion unto the house of Judah ; I even I will tear and go away, and none shall relieve him ; I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face ; and in their affliction they will seek me early.* Hos. 5. 14, 15.

And tho to forsake our sins then, when we can no longer enjoy them, seems to be rather the effect of impotency and necessity, than of choice, and so not so acceptable or praise-worthy ; yet we find God Almighty uses the one to bring about the other ; and improves a forced abstinence from sin, into a settl'd loathing and a true detestation of it : of which I shall give two noted Instances. The first out of the Old Testament, in the famous case of *Manasseh*, 2 Chron. 33. (the nearest parallel that I can find, both to the sin, and repentance of the person before us,) when *he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, more than all the Kings of Judah before him, and had made Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem to erre, and do worse than the Heathen whom the Lord had destroyed before them ;* yet we see God made use even of this way to reduce him to true Repentance, for we read at the 11. v. of this Chapter : *Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the Captains of the host of the King of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bond him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon ;* and it follows in the next verse, *When he was in affliction he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him, and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem, and unto his Kingdom ; then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God,* v. 13. and the truth of his Repentance, tho occasioned first by his affliction, appeared afterwards by the following reformation which he wrought ; for *he took away the strange Gods,* v. 15.

The second instance I shall give of a true, tho forced repentance, is in that well known case of the Prodigal son, which follows my Text in this Chapter : *tho he had wasted all his substance with riotous living, and was forced back to his fathers house only by extreme hunger and necessity, yet he was joyfully received by him, for his father ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him,* v. 20. and *the fatted calf was killed for him ;* and when his elder brother was angry at it, the good father justifies his procedure, v. 32. *It was meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found.*

And truly 'tis one good sign, that God is now taking men into

to the number of his children, when he is fixing upon them one of the greatest badges and characters of them; for therefore saith the Apostle, *we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world*; whilst those who are reserv'd for destruction hereafter, do usually in this life come into no misfortune, nor are plagued like other men. For God, does not afflict any willingly, nor grieve the children of men: but as he is grieved himself for the sufferings of his children, (for in all their affliction, saith the Prophet, *he was afflicted*;) so he doth not usually punish wicked men both here and hereafter: and therefore they who are to be punished with everlasting destruction, God suffers to enjoy their portion in this life without disturbance. And because the days of darkness must be many, therefore does he suffer the sinner many times to die an hundred year old, that he may see his full swinge of what he hath set his affections upon; and after a long and prosperous life here, without any check in his career of wickedness, he lets him drop down into hell, without the least apprehension of danger. So that in that sense it is true which the Poets say, when they tell us, that the descent to hell is easie and pleasant.

And therefore on the contrary we may reasonably presume, that tribulation and anguish, when it is born with patience, and resignation to God, and when it works a serious Reformation, will certainly minister to us an entrance into everlasting rest; and that the greater our sufferings have been, the more abundant and much more grateful shall the rest be.

Affliction, as it rises not out of the dust, but descends from that God, at whose hands we receive evil as well as good; so neither is it design'd to deject us thither; but to raise us up to God from whence it self comes. The pains of the Cross, as well as those which we must bear our selves, as that which our Saviour bore, do in some sense open the Kingdom of heaven to all believers; and to some, as the Penitent Thief, the hope of Paradise is not given till their last hour; and those who come in then, God is often pleas'd to make equal to them who have born the burden and heat of the day; nay oftentimes to give them more, than they will love much to whom much is forgiven.

It is true, there are such stubborn nature, that like clay are never hardned by the fire of afflictions; ungracious children, who fly in the face of their heavenly Father in the very instant when he is correcting them; or, it may be, like those children under the rod, who promise wonders then, and presently after forget

forget all. Such as these we have described Ps. 78. 34, 35, 36
 37. When he slew them, then they sought him, and they returned
 and enquired early after God; then they remember'd that God was
 their rock, and that the high God was their redeemer: nevertheless
 they did but flatter him with their mouth, and lied unto him with
 their tongues, for their heart was not right with him, neither con-
 tinued they stedfast in his covenant. And 'tis probable this has
 been the case formerly of this person. But there was an evident
 difference betwixt the effects of this Sickness upon him, and
 many others before. He had other sentiments of things now, (he
 told me) and acted upon quite different principles; he was not
 vext with it as it was painful, or hinder'd him from his business,
 which he would have roll'd under his tongue all the while, and
 long'd again to be at; but he submitted patiently to it, accepted
 as the hand of God, and was thankful, blessing and praising God
 not only in, but for his extremities. There was now no cursings,
 railings or reproaches to his servants, or those about him, which
 in other sicknesses were their usual entertainment, but he treat-
 ed them with all the meekness and patience in the world, be-
 giving pardons frequently of the meanest of them but for a half
 word, which the extremity of his sickness and the sharpness of
 his pain might easily force from him. His prayers were not
 much for ease or health, or a continuance in life; as for grace
 and faith, an perfect resignation to the will of God. So that I
 think, we may not only charitably but justly conclude, that this
 Sickness was not the chief ingredient, but through the grace of
 God an effectual means of a true, tho late repentance.

2. And for that I am to account in the next place, I mention
 the time of it; and to make it out to you, that tho it was
 Death-bed repentance, and therefore full of danger and the
 most hazard, yet it was not wholly impossible to be true, nor
 absolutely desperate.

That it was hugely dangerous, and of the utmost hazard to
 defer it so long, must needs be granted by all wise and consid-
 ering men: I wish all men were so wise as seriously to consider
 it, and provide for it.

For should God have snatch'd him away in the very act of
 his sin, and that, like Zimri and Cozbi, Dathan and Abiram,
 Ananias or Sapphira, he had gone down quick into hell; yet
 must have acknowledged, that righteous art thou, O Lord,
 clear when thou art judged. If God had taken him from the land
 of the living, either by some sudden accident, by a raging Feaver

by some stupid Lethargy or Apoplexie, when he had no time for reflection or repentance; in what a dreadful condition had his Soul been for ever? Or if God had vouchsafed him (as he did) some sharp lingring Sickness, when he might have had leisure to repent; yet what assurance was there that such Repentance would have followed? or if it had, that it would have been accepted? Was it not more likely that he would still have cried with the Wise man's Sluggard, *yet a little sleep, yet a little slumber, till poverty, a dismal poverty, came upon him.* But if he had resolved at that time to break off his sins by Repentance, yet alas how improper a time was that for it? 'Tis not easie to be present and consistent to our selves, when we are surrounded with disquieting if not stupifying pains, when there is a necessary decay and dulness of spirits, a short memory, flat and low affections; and at the same time a more then ordinary hurry and surcharge of worldly business; a house to be set in order, children to be provided for in their fortunes and education; creditors to be satisfied, and all this amidst the cries and mournings of our nearest relations and friends about us. And certainly we must think Repentance a very easie task, if we reckon ordinarily, that he that is disabled from all other things else, shall yet be fit to perfect and complete it.

But allowing our thoughts to be as clear or clearer in our sickness than in our calmest and strongest seasons, (which yet I think no man in his wits will believe) yet after all, what security have we that we shall be able to improve or employ it to true repentance? It may be, before we come to that, the measure of our iniquities is fill'd up already, and the irreversible sentence is gone out, tho not executed against us: My Patience shall not always strive (*& non exasperetur*, as the LXX) with men; Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground? it may be curs'd and devoted, tho we do not see it actually wither'd and destroy'd.

But supposing this also, that we are allow'd a farther time and means for repentance; yet alas, no ordinary means will serve us, when we have been thus harden'd by customary sinning: and I am sure, should God proceed with us by the measure of strict justice, he might rather take from us even that which we have, then give us any extraordinary assistances which we have so abused.

And after all this, if God shall give us such extraordinary assistances, whatever allowances God may make, yet there is still
no

no certain security or comfort to any dying death-bed Penitent. *Charity hopeth all things, and believeth all things*, and the relaxations of the censures of the Church in Absolution on probable signs of Repentance, must follow the Judgment of Charity; yet the certainty of the Sinner's Absolution with God in heaven, depends only upon the inward real sincerity of his Repentance, and consequently upon the approving of it by his future conversation; and therefore God Almighty, who only knows what the one is at present, and what the other will be, can be a competent judge of it. And certainly 'tis enough for such a Penitent if he be secured at last of entering into the Kingdom of heaven, tho he has very rarely, if at all, the present comfortable experience and assurance of it on a death-bed Repentance, which indeed is reserv'd as the reward of a constant virtuous, and holy life.

But tho what I have said be enough to conclude a Death-bed repentance infinitely hazardous, and therefore hugely unfit for any wise man to depend upon; yet will it not be sufficient to prove it absolutely impossible. No sober man certainly would hazard his life upon the chance of a Die, when 'tis a thousand to one but he miscarries; or venture into a crazy Cock-boat out of a sound Ship, when 'tis but barely possible he may be saved; and yet no wise man neither but will allow a possibility of being sav'd both for the one and the other: and it is only this bare possibility of a Death-bed Repentance that I am now pleading for.

And that this Possibility was produced into act, and so render'd very probable also in the case of this Person here before us, will best be judged by the marks I am now to give you of the sincerity of his Repentance; for which I am in the next place to account.

3. And 'twas the power of the Divine Grace, and of that only, that brake through all these obstacles that I have now mention'd; that God (who is a God of infinite compassion and forbearance) allow'd him leisure and opportunity for Repentance; that he awaken'd him from his Spiritual slumber by a pungent Sickness; that he gave him such a presence of Mind, as both to provide prudently for his worldly affairs, and yet not to be distracted or diverted by them from the thoughts of a better world; that lengthened out his day of grace, and accompanied the ordinary means of salvation, and the weak ministry of his Word, with the convincing and over-ruling power of his

his Spirit to his Conscience ; which Word of God became to him quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of his soul and spirit ; and at last the spirit of God witnessed to his spirit, that now he was become one of the children of God.

Now if the Thief upon the Cross (an instance too much abused) was therefore accepted, because accompanied with all the effects of a sincere Convert, which his condition was capable of ; as confession of Christ in the midst of the blasphemies of Pharisees, and his own lewd companion, and desertion even of Christ's Disciples ; if his repentance be therefore judged real, because he seems to be more concern'd in the remembrance of Christ's future Kingdom than his own death ; if St. Paul was prov'd by the same more abundant labours which he commended in the Corinthians, yea what zeal ? what fear ? what vehement desire ? 2 Cor. 7. 11. I think I shall make it appear, that the repentance of this Person was accompanied with the like hopeful symptoms : and I am so sensible of that awful Presence both of God and man before whom I speak, who are easily able to cover my failings, That I shall not deliver any thing, but what I know to be a strict and a religious truth.

Upon my first visit to him, (May 26.) just at his return from journey out of the West, he most gladly received me, shew'd extraordinary respects upon the score of mine Office, thank'd me, who had in mercy and good providence sent me to him, who so much needed my prayers and counsels ; acknowledging how unworthily therefore he had treated that order of men, reproaching them that they were proud, and prophesied only for rewards ; but now he had learnt to value them ; that he esteem'd them the servants of the most High God, who were to shew to him the way to everlasting life.

At the same time I found him labouring under strange troubled conflicts of mind, his spirit wounded, and his conscience full of terrors. Upon his journey he told me, he had been arguing with greater vigor against God and Religion than ever he had done in his life time before, and that he was resolved to run 'em down with the argument and spite in the world, but, like the great Convert St. Paul, he found it hard to kick against the pricks. For God at that time had so struck his heart by his immediate hand, that presently he argued as strongly for God and Virtue, as before he had done against it. That God strangely open'd his heart, creating in his mind most awful and tremendous thoughts and Ideas of the Divine Majesty, with a delightful contemplation of the
Divine

Divine Nature and Attributes, and of the loveliness of Religion and Virtue. I never (said he) was advanced thus far towards happiness in my life before, tho upon the commissions of some sins extraordinary I have had some checks and warnings considerable from within, but still struggled with 'em, and so wore them off again. The most observable that I remember was this: One day at an Atheistical Meeting, at a person of Qualitie's, I undertook to manage the Cause, and was the principal Disputant against God and Piety, and for my performances received the applause of the whole company; upon which my mind was terribly struck, and I immediately reply'd thus to my self Good God! that a Man, that walks upright, that sees the wonderful works of God, and has the uses of his senses and reason, should use them to the denying of his Creator! But tho this was a good beginning towards my Conversion, to find my Conscience touch'd for my sins, yet it wore off again; nay, all my life long I had a secret value and reverence for an honest man, and lov'd Morality in others. But I had form'd an Scheme of Religion to my self, which would solve all that God or Conscience might force upon me; yet I was not ever well reconciled to the business of Christianity, nor had that reverence for the Gospel of Christ as I ought to have. Which estate of mind continued, till the 53^d. Chapter of *Isaiab* was read to him, (wherein there is a lively description of the Sufferings of our Saviour, and the benefits thereof) and some other portions of Scripture; by the power and efficacy of which Word, assisted by his Holy Spirit, God so wrought upon his heart, that he declar'd, that the mysteries of the Passion appeared so clear and plain to him, as ever anything did that was represented in a Glass; so that that Joy and Admiration, which possess'd his Soul upon the reading of God's Word to him, was remarkable to all about him; and he took so much delight in his Testimonies, that in my absence he begg'd his Mother and Lady to read the same to him frequently, and was unsatisfied (notwithstanding his great pains and weakness) till he had learned especially the 53 of *Isaiab* without book.

At the same time, discoursing of his manner of life from youth up, and which all men knew was too too much devoted to the service of sin, and that the lusts of the flesh, of the eye, and the pride of life, had captivated him: He was very large and particular in his acknowledgments about it, more ready to cuse himself than I or any one else can be; publickly crying out, O Blessed God, can such and horrid Creature as I am be accepted by thee, who has deny'd thy Being, and contemn'd thy Power? asking often, Can there be mercy and pardon for me? Will

such a Wretch as I? and in the middle of his sickness said, *Shall the unspeakable joys of Heaven be confer'd on me? O Mighty Saviour! never through thine infinite Love and Satisfaction! O never but by the purchase of thy Blood!* adding, *that with all abhorrency he did reflect upon his former life; that sincerely and from his heart he did repent of all that folly and madness which he had committed.*

Indeed he had a true and lively sense of God, great mercy to him in striking his hard heart, and laying his Conscience open, which hitherto was deaf to all Gods calls and method; saying, *if that God, who died for great as well as lesser sinners, did not speedily apply his infinite merits to his poor soul, his wound was such as no man could conceive or bear, crying out, that he was the vilest Wretch and Dog that the Sun shined upon, or the earth bore; that now he saw his error in not living up to that Reason which God endued him with, and which he unworthily vilify'd and condemn'd; wish'd he had been a starving Leper crawling in a ditch, that he had been a Link boy or a Beggar, or for his whole life time confin'd to a dungeon, rather than thus to have sinned against his God.*

How remarkable was his Faith, in a hearty embracing and devout confession of all the Articles of our Christian Religion, and all the Divine mysteries of the Gospel? saying, *that that absurd and foolish Philosophy, which the world so much admired, propagated by the late Mr. Hobbs, and others, had undone him, and many more, of the best parts in the Nation; who, without Gods great mercy to them, may never, I believe, attain to such a Repentance.*

I must not omit to mention his faithful adherence to and casting himself entirely upon, the mercies of Jesus Christ, and the free grace of God, declared to repenting sinners through him; with a thankful remembrance of his Life, Death, and Resurrection; begging God to strengthen his faith, and often crying out, *Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.*

His mighty love and esteem of the holy Scriptures, his resolutions to read them frequently, and meditate upon them if God should spare him, having already tasted the good Word; for having spoken to his heart he acknowledged, *all the seeming absurdities and contradictions thereof, fancied by men of corrupt and reprobate judgments, were vanished, and the excellency and beauty appeared, being come, so receive the truth in the love of it.*

His extraordinary fervent Devotions in his frequent Prayers of his own, most excellent and correct; among the rest, for the King, in such a manner as became a dutiful Subject, and a truly grateful Servant; for the Church and Nation, for some particular Relations, and then for all Men; calling frequently upon me at all hours to pray with him, or read the Scriptures to him; and towards the end of his sickness would heartily desire God to pardon his infirmities, if he should not be so wakeful and industrious through the whole duty as he wish'd to be; and that *tho the flesh was weak, yet the spirit was willing, and hoped God would accept that.*

His continual invocation of God's grace and holy Spirit to sustain him,

to keep him from all evil thoughts, from all temptations and Diabolical suggestions, and every thing which might be prejudicial to that religious temper of mind, which God had now so happily endued him withal, crying out, one night especially, *how terribly the Tempter did assault him, by casting upon him lewd and wicked imaginations, but I thank God (said he) I abhor them all, and by the power of his grace, which I am sure is sufficient for me, I have overcome them; 'tis the malice of the Devil, because I am rescu'd from him; and the goodness of God, that frees me from all my spiritual enemies.*

His great joy at his Ladies conversion from Popery to the Church of England, (being, as he term'd it, *A Faction supported only by Fraud and Cruelty,*) which was by her done with deliberation and mature judgment, the dark mists of which have for some months before been breaking away, but now cleared, by her receiving the blessed Sacrament with her dying Husband, at the receiving of which no man could express more joy and devotion than he did; and having handled the word of life, and seen the salvation of God, in the preparation of his mind, he was now ready to depart in peace.

His hearty concern for the pious Education of his Children, wishing that his Son might never be a Wit, that is, (as he himself explain'd it,) one of those wretched Creatures, who pride themselves in abusing God and Religion, denying his Being, or his Providence, but that he might become an Honest and Religious man, which could only be the support and blessing of his Family; complaining what a vicious and naughty world they were brought into, and that no Fortunes or Honours were comparable to the Love and Favour of God to them, in whose Name he blessed them, pray'd for them, and committed them to his Protection.

His strict charge to those persons, in whose custody his Papers were, to burn all his profane and lewd Writings, as being only fit to promote Vice and Immorality, by which he had so highly offended God, and shamed and blasphemed that Holy Religion into which he had been Baptiz'd; and all his obscene and filthy Pictures, which were so notoriously scandalous.

His readiness to make restitution to the utmost of his power to all persons who he had injur'd; and for those whom he could not make a compensation to, he prayed for Gods, and their pardons: His remarkable justice in taking all possible care for the payement of his debts, which, before, he confessed he had not so fairly and effectually done.

His readiness to forgive all Injures done against him, some more particularly mention'd, which were great and provoking; nay annexing thereto all the assurance of a future friendship, and hoping he should be as freely forgiven at the hand of God.

How tender and concern'd was he for his Servants about him in his extremities, (manifested by the beneficence of his Will to them,) pitying their troubles in watching with him, and attending him, treating them with candor and kindness, as if they had been his intimates!

How hearty were his endeavours to be serviceable to those about him

exhorting them to the fear and love of God, and to make a good use of his
 forbearance and long-suffering to sinners, which should lead them to repen-
 tance. And here I must not pass by his pious and most passionate excla-
 mation to a Gentleman of some character, who came to visit him upon his
 death-bed: O Remember that you contemn God no more, He is an aveng-
 ing God, and will visit you for your sins; will in mercy, I hope, touch your
 conscience sooner or later as he has done mine; You and I have been Friends
 and Sinners together a great while, therefore I am the more free with
 you; We have been all mistaken in our conceits and opinions; our persua-
 sions have been false and groundless, therefore God grant you repentance.
 And seeing him the next day again, he said to him, Perhaps you were dis-
 obliged by my plainness to you yesterday; I spake the words of truth and
 soberness to you, and (striking his hand upon his breast) said, I hope God
 will touch your heart.

Likewise his Commands to me, to preach abroad, and to let all men
 know (if they knew it not already,) how severely God had disciplin'd him
 for his sins by afflicting hand; that his sufferings were most just, tho he
 had laid ten thousand times more upon him; how he had laid one stripe up-
 on another because of his grievous provocations, till he had brought him
 home to himself, that in his former visitations he had not that blessed
 effect he was now sensible of. He had formerly some loose thoughts and slight
 resolutions of reforming, and design'd to be better, because even the present
 consequences of sin were still persterring him, and were so troublesome and
 inconvenient to him; but that now he had other sentiments of things, and
 was settled upon other principles.

His willingness to dye, if it pleased God, resigning himself always to
 the Divine disposal; but if God should spare him yet a longer time here,
 he hoped to bring glory to the name of God in the whole course of his life, and
 particularly by his endeavours to convince others, and to assure them of
 the danger of their condition, if they continued impenitent; and how gra-
 tuitously God had dealt with him.

His great sense of his obligations to those Excellent men, the Right Re-
 verend my Lord Bishop of Oxford, and Dr. Marshal, for their charitable
 and frequent Visits to him, and Prayers with him; and Dr. Burnet, who
 came on purpose from London to see him, who were all very serviceable
 to his Repentance.

His extraordinary duty and reverence to his Mother, with all the grate-
 ful respects to her imaginable, and kindness to his good Lady, beyond ex-
 pression, (which may well enhance such a loss to them,) and to his Chil-
 dren, obliging them with all the endearments that a good Husband or a
 tender Father could bestow.

To conclude these Remarks, I shall only read to you his dying Remon-
 strance, (sufficiently attested and sign'd by his own hand, as his truest sense,
 which I hope may by useful for that good end he design'd it,) in man-
 ner and form following.

For the benefit of all those whom I may have drawn into sin by my example and encouragement, I leave to the world this my last Declaration, which I deliver in the presence of the great God, who knows the secrets of all hearts, and before whom I am now appearing to be judged.

That from the bottom of my soul I detest and abhor the whole course of my former wicked life; that I think I can never sufficiently admire the goodness of God, who has given me a true sense of my pernicious Opinions and vile Practices, by which I have hitherto lived without Hope, and without God in the world; have been an Open Enemy to Jesus Christ, doing the utmost despite to the holy Spirit of Grace. And that the greatest testimony of my Charity to such is, to warn 'em in the Name of God, and as they regard the welfare of their Immortal Souls, no more to deny his Being, or his Providence, or despise his Goodness; no more to make a mock of Sin, or contemn the pure and excellent Religion ever Blessed Redeemer, thro' whose Merits alone, I one of the Greatest of Sinners, do yet hope for Mercy and Forgiveness. Amen.

Decalred and Sign'd in the presence of

ANNE ROCHESTER.

J. ROCHESTER.

ROBERT PARSONS. Jun. 19. 1680.

And now I cannot but mention with joy and admiration that steady temper of mind, which he enjoy'd though the whole course of his Sickness and Repentance; which must proceed, not from a hurry and perturbation of mind or body, arising from the fear of Death, or dread of Hell only, but from an ingenuous love to God, and an uniform regard to Virtue, (suitable to that solemn declaration of his, *I would not commit the least sin to gain a Kingdom,*) with all possible symptoms of a lasting perseverance in it, if God should have restored him. To which may be added his comfortable persuasions of God's accepting him to his mercy, saying three or four days before his death, *I shall die, But Oh, what unspeakable glories do I see! what joys, beyond thought or expression, am I sensible of! I am assured of Gods mercy to me through Jesus Christ. Oh how I long to die, and to be with my Saviour!*

The time of his Sickness and Repentance was just nine weeks; in all which time he was so much master of his reason, and had so clear and understanding, (saying 30 hours, about the middle of it, in which he was desirous,) that he never dictated or spoke more composed in his life: and therefore if any shall continue to say, his Piety was the effect of madness or vapours; let me tell them, 'tis highly disingenuous; and that the assertion is as silly as it is wicked. And moreover that the force of what I have delivered may not be evaded by wicked men, who are resolv'd to harden their hearts, maugre all Convictions, by saying, *Thou thing was done in a corner*; I appeal, for the truth thereof, to all sorts of persons who in con-

sidera-

derable numbers visited and attended him, and more particularly to those eminent Physicians who were near him, and conversant with him in the whole course of his tedious sickness; and who, if any, are competent judges of a Phrensy or delirium.

There are many more excellent things in my absence which have occasionally dropt from his mouth, that will not come within the narrow compass of a Sermon; these, I hope, will sufficiently prove what I produce them for. And if any shall be still unsatisfied herein in this hard-hearted generation, it matters not, let them at their cost be Unbelievers still, so long as this Excellent Penitent enjoys the comfort of his Repentance. And now from all these admirable signs we have great reason to believe comfortably, that his Repentance was Real, and his End happy; and accordingly imitate the neighbours and Cofens of Elizabeth, (Luke 1. 58.) who, when they heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her, came and rejoiced with her.

For so we must learn, like the Ambassadors to some new Prince, to turn our condolences into congratulations, in conformity to an heavenly example; For there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repents:

A joy to God the Father, who has solemnly sworn, that he delights not in the death of a sinner, but rather that he should repent and live; who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.

2. A joy to God the Son, that good Shepherd, mention'd in the verse before my Text, who left the ninety and nine just persons in the wilderness, and went after that which was lost, till he had found it, and when he had found it, he laid it on his shoulders rejoicing; and when he cometh home, he calls together his friends and his neighbours (on heaven and earth,) saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.

3. A Joy to God the Holy Ghost, after he had been so often griev'd, so spitefully treated, and so long resisted.

And 4. a joy to the whole Court of Heaven in the presence of the holy Angels, v. 10. those ministring Spirits, sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation; to see that now at last their labour is not in vain in the Lord, but that there is one more Subject gained to the obedience of their and our common Lord, deliver'd from the slavery, and admitted to fill up the vacancy of Apostate Spirits.

And as our *πολιτευμα*, our proper or natural Citizenship or conversation is in heaven; so should our joys too be conformable to those of our fellow-citizens. And therefore after the Relations and Friends of this great Person have paid their natural tribute of tears to so near a Relation, they should then turn their sorrows into joys, by the comfortable consideration of his being a Penitent upon earth, and a Saint in heaven.

Thus his dear Mother should rejoice, that the Son of her love and of her fears, as well as of her bowels, is now born again into a better world; adopted by his heavenly Father, and gone before her to take possession of eternal inheritance.

2. His truly loving Consort should rejoice, that God has been so gra-

cious to them both, as at the same time to give him a sight of his errors point of Practice, and her self (not altogether without his means and endeavours) a sight of hers in point of Faith. And truly, considering the great prejudices and dangers of the *Roman Religion*, I think I may say that there is joy in heaven, and should be on earth, for Her conversion as well as His.

3. His Noble and most hopeful Issue should rejoyce, as their years are capable; not that a dear and loving Father has left them, but that since he must leave them: he has left the example of a Penitent and not of a Sinner; the Blessing of a Saint, in recommending them to an All sufficient Father, and not entailing on them the fatal Curse that attends the Posterity of the wicked and impenitent.

4. All good men should rejoyce, to see the triumphs of the Cross in the latter days, and the words of Divine Wisdom and Power. And bad men certainly, when ever they consider it, are most of all concern'd to joy and rejoyce in it, as a condemn'd Malefactor is, to hear that a fellow criminal has got his Pardon, and that he may do so too, if he speedily sue for it.

And this joy of all will still be the greater, if we compare it with the Joy there is in the case of Just persons, that need no Repentance, viz. they need not such a solemn extraordinary Repentance, or the whole change of heart and mind, as great Sinners do: and of this my Text pronounces that there is *greater joy in heaven over one such sinner that truly repenteth, than there is over ninety and nine just persons that need not such repentance*. And the reason we may conceive to be this; that since all Joy arises from Admiration and Surprise, as from something that is new and unexpected; accordingly the joy that proceeds from the repentance and new life of a notorious Sinner, must needs be greater then that which rises from the constant piety of a good man, which we have seen every day; a resurrection from the dead is more remarkable then our first life. Besides that such a Penitent's former failings, are ordinarily the occasion of a greater and more active piety afterwards; as our Convert earnestly wishes *That God would be pleased to spare him but one year more, that in that time he might honour his Name proportionably to the dishonour done to God in his whole life past*. And we see St. Paul laboured more abundantly than all the Apostles in the planting of the Church, because he had sinned most furiously before in the destruction of it; and our Saviour himself tells us, *that to whom much is given they will love much, but to whom little is forgiven they will love little*; and we know, a Commander will love a Soldier more that redeems his former cowardise, by doing some brave and daring action then him, who never had that taint upon him, but yet never achieved anything remarkable. A Husbandman more rejoyces at the improvement of briars and thorns into an excellent crop, from which once he had but little expectation, than for such a soil as was remarkable neither for the one or the other. 'Tis certainly the more safe, indeed the only safe way to be constantly virtuous, and he that is wise indeed, i. e. *wise into salvation*, will endeavour to be one of those that need no repentance; I mean that entire

whole work of beginning anew, but will draw out the same thread through his whole life, and not let the Sun go down upon any of his sins; but then the other Repentance is the more remarkable, and, where it is real, the more effectual, to produce a fervent and a fruitful piety; besides the greater glory to God in the influence of the example. Which may probably be farther reason of the excessive joy of Angels at the Conversion of such a Sinner; because they, who are better acquainted with humane nature than we; and knowing it apt, like the Pharisees, to demand a Sign from heaven, for the reformation of corrupted customs; they discern too, that such desperate Spiritual recoveries, will seem so many Openings of the Heavens in the descent of the holy Dove, visibly to the Standers by; and accordingly will have the great influence upon them. And 'tis this in the last place, that I am to recommend to all that hear me this day.

And having thus discharg'd the office of an Historian, in a faithful representation of the Repentance and Conversion of this great Sinner; give me now to bespeak you as an Ambassador of Christ, and in his name earnestly persuade you to be reconcil'd to him, and to follow this Illustrious Example, not in his Sins any more, but in his Sorrows for them, and his forsaking them. I hope better things of you, my Brethren, then to think that all that now hear me, have need of such a repentance, tho all have need of me, and the best are most sensible of it. But if there be any in this place, elsewhere, who have been drawn into a complacency or practice of any kind of sin from his example, let those especially be perswaded to break off their sins by repentance, by the same example; that as he has been for the dead, so he may be now for the rising again of many in Israel. God knows there are too many that are wise enough to discern and follow the examples of evil, but to do good from those examples they have no power; like those absurd flatterers we read of, who could imitate Plato in his crookedness, Aristotle in his stammering, and Alexander the Great in the bending of his neck, and the shrillness of his voice, but either could not, or would not, imitate them in any of their perfections; but like to those bad stomachs, that delight in dirt and charcoal, but nauseate savory and wholesome food. Such as these I would beseech, in their cooler seasons, to ask themselves that question, *What fruit had you in those things whereof you are now ashamed, for the end of these things is death?* And if any incourage themselves in their wickedness from this example, resolving however to enjoy the good things that are present; to fill themselves with costly wines, and to let no part of pleasure pass by them untasted, supposing with the Gospel rich man, that when one comes to them from the dead, when Sicknefs or old Age approaches, that then they will repent; let such as these consider the dreadful hazard they run by such pernicious counsels. It may be (and it is but just with God it should be) that whilst they are making provisions for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof, and are saying to their souls, *Soul thou hast much goods laid up for many years, therefore take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;* perhaps just then at the same time the hand of God may be writing upon the walls of their habitation.

birations that fatal sentence, *Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be requir'd of thee, and then whose shall all those things be, which thou hast provided* And what sad reflections must such a one needs make upon his own follie when he sees that all that mirth and ease, which he has promised himself for so many years, must be at an end in a very few hours? and not only so but that mirth turn'd into howlings, and that ease into a bed of flames when the soul must be torn away on a sudden from the things it loved, and go where it will hate to live, and yet cannot die. And were it not better for us to embrace cordially the things which belong to our everlasting peace before they are hid from our eyes? Were it not better for us all to be warned sometimes by preventing such a danger, then to open our eyes, as the unhappy rich man did, when we are in the place of torment?

Be perswaded then with humble, penitent, and obedient hearts to go out of your sinful selves, and meet the Blessed Jesus, who is now on the way and comes to us in the person and in the bowels of a Saviour, wooing us to accept those easie conditions of pardon and peace offer'd in his holy Gospel rather than to stay till he become our Adversary and our Judge too, when he will deliver us over to the tormentors, till we have paid the utmost farthing, i. e. to all eternity: when those who have made a mock at him all their lives, and laugh'd at the pretended cheats of Religion and Priests, shall find themselves at last the greatest fools, and the most sadly cheated in the world; for God will then laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh, when it cometh as desolation, and their destruction as a whirlwind. And since they would not suffer his Mercy to rejoice over his Justice, nor cause any joy in heaven, as the Text mentions, at their conversion; his Justice will certainly rejoyce over his Mercy, and cause joy in heaven (as it did at the fall of Babylon, which would not be cured, Rev. 19. 1.) in their confusion. And O that there were such a heart in them, that they would consider this sometimes: that in the midst of their carnal jollities they would but vouchsafe one regard to what may happen hereafter, and what will certainly be the end of these things. For however the fruits of sin may seem pleasant to the eye, and to be desired, to make one seem wise and witty to the world; yet alas, they are all but empty and unsatisfactory at present, and leave a mortal sting behind them, and bitterness in the latter end; like the book St. John ate, (Rev. 10. 10.) which in his mouth was sweet as honey, but as soon as he had eaten it, his belly was bitter. And tho God should please at last to bring men back in their old age from their sinful courses, by a way of weeping, to pluck them from the fire-brands out of everlasting burnings; yet if men consider how rare and difficult a thing it is to be born again when one is old, how many pangs and violences to nature there must needs be, to put off the habits and inclinations to old sins: as difficult (saith the Prophet) as for the Leopard to change his spots, or the Ethiopian his skin; and then when that's done, what scars and weaknesses even a Cure must leave behind, I say, he that duly considers this, will think it better to secure his salvation, and all his present true comforts, by preserving his innocency, or alleviating his work

require a daily repentance for lesser failings, then to venture upon one single chance of a death-bed repentance; which is no more to be depended upon, than the performance, or acceptance, then it can encourage any man not to labour, because *Elias* was fed by Ravens, or the *Israelites* with Manna from heaven.

If then there be any (tho' alas that need not be asked) that have made the greatness of their Wit, or Birth, or Fortune, *instruments of iniquity*; let them now convert them, in their own conversion, to that original noble use for which God intended them, *viz. to be instruments of righteousness unto holiness.*

To these especially that are thus great, not onely God, but this great person also, by my mouth, *being dead yet speaketh*; for as *St. Paul* seem'd more especially concern'd for his brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh; and even the rich man in hell, tho' sufficiently distracted by his own sufferings, yet seems hugely desirous that one might be sent from the dead to his brethren, that he might *testifie unto them, lest they also come into his place of torments*: so this illustrious Convert, after God had open'd his eyes to see his follies, was more especially desirous of the salvation of those that were his brethren, tho' not in the flesh, yet in the greatness of their quality, and of their sins; passionately wishing, *that all such, were not only almost, but altogether such as he now was*, saving his bodily afflictions; and of great force, me thinks, should the admonitions of a dying person be. The ingenious *Michael de Montaigne* reckons him the best Physician, who himself has had the disease which he pretends to cure; and be- hold a greater than he says to *St. Peter*, *when thou art converted strengthen thy brethren*; which assures us, that they which have themselves been in a condition to need a remarkable conversion, are not incapable thereof, but obliged, and the better qualified for such a charitable work.

Now these especially I would beseech, as the Minister of Christ, and as such, *tho' we are reviled we bless, tho' we are defamed we intrust, to suffer the word of Exhortation*, that they would not terminate their eyes upon the outward pomp and pageantry that attends them, as the vulgar Jews did upon their Rites and Ceremonies; but (as the wiser *Israelites*, who esteem'd those glittering formalities as the Types and Images of heavenly things,) be quickned by them to the ambition of original honours, and future glory. How much were it to be wish'd, that such persons especially would be followers of God and goodness, since whether they will or no men will be followers of them; all of them according to their respective magnitudes, like stars, casting a good or bad influence upon their inferiors, and not only so, but oftentimes upon their superiors too; as the corrupt blood in the feet in the course of its circulation, after some time passes upwards into the head.

It is true, and eminent station is liable to several mischiefs, from which mean condition is free; but the God of order, who has made dignity in place, and affluence of riches necessary to the world, has proportion'd his supports: and if the incitements to sin do abound unto the rich and noble, the Grace of God, if they are careful to improve it, will much more abound,

bound, both to Gods glory and their own. Thus if the temptations of great persons be more, and greater then those of inferiors; their abilities and understandings are ordinarily greater too: and if they lie more open to the assaults of the Devil, they have generally greater sagacities to foresee the dangers, and more powerful assistances to go through it. Nor is Piety inconsistent with Greatness any more then it is with Policy, but is the best foundation and security both to the one and the other. The breeding of *Moses* at Court, without doubt contributed much even to his Religious performances, at least so far, as to make them more useful and exemplary to others: but then he was sincerely virtuous all the while, as well whilst reputed the Son of *Pharaoh's* daughter, as *Jethro's* Son in law. The Prophet *Isaiah* was Nephew to a King, and bred, as is supposed, in the Court, whence we may observe his style is more majestic then the other Prophets, as that of the great Doctor of the Gentiles, who was bred at the feet of Gamaliel, is then the other Apostles; God making use of the natural tempers and educations of men, to be assisting to supernatural purposes.

We find Christians in *Cesar's* household as soon as any where else in *Rome*; and when Christianity had once gain'd *Constantine*, it spread itself farther over the Empire in a few years, then before it had done in some Centuries: as waters running downwards spread themselves freer then when forced upwards against nature. Since then so much mischief depends upon illustrious examples, will it not better become men to draw the multitude after them to heaven, by their piety, then by infectious guilt to be at the head of a miserable company of the Damnd?

'Tis this piety, a timely and exemplary piety, that will perpetuate to men of birth and fortunes, their Honors, and their Estates too, as well by deriving on them the blessing of God, who is the true fountain of honour, as by creating an awe and a reverence for them from all orders of men, even to many generations; a reverence which will be fresh and lasting when all the trophies of wit and gaiety are laid in the dust. 'Tis this piety that will be the guide of their youth, and the comfort of their age, so long as *length of days are in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour*. 'Tis this, and this only, that can make all outward blessings comfortable, and indeed blessings to us, by making them the steps and means of attaining the never fading honours and incomprehensible glories of that Kingdom which is above; where there shall be no more sin, nor sickness, nor pain, nor tears, nor death, but we shall rest from our labours, and our works shall follow us.

Unto which God of his infinite mercy bring us, for the merits and for the mediation of *Jesus Christ* our Saviour; to whom with the Father and Holy Spirit, let us ascribe all Praise and Adoration, now and for ever. Amen.

FINIS.

